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ABSTRACT

Patricia Thompson, a women's studies educator, has in her previous writing proposed the Hestian/Hermean paradigm to distinguish dual systems of action that operate independently in the private, domestic (Hestian) sphere and the public, civic (Hermean) sphere. Based on her concept, this paper suggests that early childhood education might also be considered a Hestian discipline wherein sustenance and nurturance are primary goals. It is pointed out that both early childhood education and home economics education acknowledge the importance of the domestic domain in the development of individuals. The paper discusses the relationship between early childhood education and the Hestian/Hermean paradigm, the under-emphasis of the Hestian private domain, the under-conceptualization of the Hermean public domain, and the conceptualization of the Hestian and Hermean systems in early childhood education. The paper also discusses the development of an ethic of caring which permeates the Hestian system. The topics of affect and cognition, and attachment and separation are also addressed. Contains 19 references. (MOK)

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HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: THE HESTIAN CONNECTION

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Introduction

As a metaphor, the goddess Hestia---ancient Greek protector of the household, family, and home---casts a long shadow that covers two closely connected fields of study: Home Economics and Early Childhood Education. Thompson (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995) has proposed the Hestian/Hermean paradigm to distinguish dual systems of action that operate independently in the private, domestic (Hestian) sphere and the public, civic (Hermean) sphere. The over-arching goals of the two systems are sustenance and nurturance in the Hestian system and governance in the Hermean system.

Thompson identifies Home Economics as the discipline of the Hestian domain. This paper extends Thompson's paradigm to suggest that Early Childhood Education might also be considered a Hestian discipline wherein sustenance and nurturance are primary goals. Since children must learn to function in both Hestian and Hermean systems, the fact that they leave one domain to enter another must be taken into account in planning for their development. This paper addresses the sustenance and nurturance goals of Thompson's

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Hestian system with McNamee's work on the development of an ethic of caring, as children make the transition from home to school, from the private to the public domain.

The Relationship between HEE and ECE

There has always been a strong intuitive connection between early childhood education and home economics education: Both HEE and ECE acknowledge the importance of the domestic domain in the development of individuals. To the extent that the mother is the child's first environment, the family is the child's first teacher, the child's first educational environment. ECE in school settings represents a continuation of processes begun in the home and teachers often create a homelike atmosphere to promote a sustaining and nurturing environment. Thus, the household, family, and home give way to the classroom, school, and educational system at large. The site of enculturation and socialization shifts from a private to a public institution and, hopefully, to a balance of the two.

For EC educators the home and school emphases are, or should be, equally strong; but, in all honesty, we think the household, family, and home emphasis (the private domain) is sometimes underemphasized as EC educators become immersed in a child's school life (the public domain).

The Relationship between ECE and the Hestian/Hermean Paradigm

In addition to an equal emphasis on home and school, in ECE the interaction between the two systems of human action, the private (Hestian) and the public (Hermean), should be strong. ECE should function as a connection between the private and public domains and serve as a prototype of such connection both in conceptualizing classrooms as strongly Hestian, not just Hermean, and in conceptualizing human beings as needing to participate, throughout life, in both domestic and civic life. Often, as a field of study, and as an area of praxis, ECE fails in this respect. When ECE fails, we think, it does so because it underemphasizes the Hestian private domain with its focus on connection, cooperation, and caring and under-conceptualize the Hermean public domain with its emphasis on control and domination.

The Under-emphasis of the Hestian Private Domain

If EC educators focus only, or primarily, on school-based education the function and power of household, family, and home can easily be underemphasized, even lost. A child's school experience comes to be seen as somehow separate and distinct from the Hestian private domain which comes before a child ever enters a school setting historically, and from the Hestian private domain which comes before, and continues after, time spent in school on a more immediate daily basis. The everydayness of a household's economic

activities, together with the on-going dynamics of family relationships, creates a psycho-social entity called "home". Home is often a taken-for-granted concept that is nevertheless highly charged as promoting or stunting the growth and development of children. The family which creates the home can be seen, even acted upon, as vaguely negative or vaguely positive as an influence. Household, family, and home are often not seen as influences with which school personnel interact in an ongoing manner, co-constructing an environment that nurtures a child's emotional and cognitive development.

Furthermore, if EC educators organize and run classrooms as Hermean systems of control and domination, rather than as Hestian systems of nurturing and sustaining connection, cooperation, and caring they are training children for public, not private life, and for a kind of public life that will carry over into private life, each based on control and domination.

The Under-conceptualization of the Hermean Public Domain

While EC educators have been strong in conceptualizing the school as one aspect of public life, they have not been equally strong in conceptualizing the public domain beyond school settings or the powerful effect of each public setting on the other: settings which Bronfenbrenner would describe as a child's ecological environment conceived as a set of nested structures,

"each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). This nested ecological environment would begin with the immediate setting in which a child finds herself (either private or public), moving then to the relationship between a child's settings (both private and public), on to events occurring in private and public settings in which the child is not even present but which affect her, and finally to the influences of culture or subculture on each/all private and public settings (p. 3).

Conceptualizing the Hestian and Hermean Systems in ECE

When ECE attempts to focus on the whole child, or, more accurately, on a child's whole experience with all of its complex parts, a recognition of the Hestian/Hermean systems becomes possible and enriches the field in terms of both theory and praxis.

<u>For example, focus for a moment on the Hestian System, Private Domain:</u>

- Domestic life with its often invisible, inaudible nuances of relationship is both the focus of study (past, present, and future relationships) and the stuff of daily experience which must be integrated with a school life/work life.

- The ideology of a sustaining and nurturing connection is the

powerful organizer of ECE, both as a focus of theorymaking and praxis: connection between parents, between parent and child, between child and sibling, between child and extended family members, between child and friend, between child and "ancillary" caregiver, between child and teacher, child and administrator. EC educators have chosen a profession which holds the nurturing and sustaining connection as a value, a profession which doesn't work well without this kind of connection. They have chosen a profession which is intimately connected to our own domestic life, and intimately connected to our own early experience growing up in a family and attending a school.

- An ethic of caring, with its beginnings in human attachment, has always been integrated into theories of human development, which are inseparable from ECE. An ethic of care has also been integrated into the problem of praxis, as EC educators struggle to apply theory to actual relationships with the children, parents, and colleagues in the public domain, as well as with their own children and family members who are left behind in a private domain or disseminated to other parts of the public domain.

<u>In addition, focus on the Hermean System, Public Domain:</u>

- EC educators are, and should be, involved in civic life, in the public domain. They are professionals working in schools to maintain or improve our family's economic status; these schools are

in communities. In these schools and communities EC educators are visible and audible as they teach, as they explain and justify methodologies, as they attempt to make life for young children safe, secure, and nurturing. EC educators are involved in civic life but should be involved in a particular way: a way that infuses connection, cooperation, and caring into a Hermean system which, at worst, is controlling and dominating and which, at best, offers control informed by an ethic of justice.

- The ethic of justice (for children, for families, for self), often the only focus of morality theory, for EC educators is seldom separated from the ethic of caring. It is seen as a continuation of nurturing early human attachment experiences between child and caregivers in the private domain of the child's home and in the much needed Hestian environments of nursery, day care, and EC public school settings.

It is on the development of an ethic of caring which permeates the Hestian system, and which should permeate HE and ECE in both theory and praxis, that we would like to focus in the remainder of this paper.

The Development of an Ethic of Caring

The development of an ethic of caring begins with interaction:

1) the interaction between the private and public domains as the developmental settings where caring might develop;

2) the interaction between cognition and affect, i.e., the thinking and feeling functions of a person; and

3) the interaction between being cared for and being told the correct words (that one should care), the integration between receiving care and being supported while being caring oneself.

Without these interactions we do not think that caring can be taught; or, more specifically, that the teaching of an ethic of caring will "take" unless certain kinds of life experience precede and are then integrated with the teaching. So we might question: How do children develop an ethic of caring? Can we facilitate the development of caring children...the development of care-full children...of children who are and continue to develop as people "full of care" in both the private and public domains, rather than as care-less people, people "without care", in the private and public domains both of which contain the people, animals, plants, and natural and human-made objects which should be the recipients of care?

We see these questions, the questions of both HE and ECE, the questions of relationship and connection, as the key questions for our world in both its private and public spheres. It is these

questions which underlie our deep concerns about the devastating increase in violence in every sphere of our society, our concerns about the devastating increase of children and adults without conscience, children and adults who are without care.

To move toward answering these questions, whether home economist or EC educator, there are some ideas which we need to consider about the development of caring:

1) that the development of an ethic of caring involves both cognition and affect;

2) that an ethic of caring develops over time; and

3) that an ethic of caring, as it develops, is dynamic, affected by known and unknown changing elements in the person as well as in the environment.

1) **<u>The development of an ethic of caring involves both affect and cognition</u>**.

It is important to recognize that our goal in facilitating the development of an ethic of caring as home economists and EC educators is double-edged.

The first edge in facilitating the development of an ethic of

caring is affect---for we want a person to feel for her relationships to people, animals, plants, natural and human-made objects; to care about caring. This caring feeling is not likely to develop through an approach which emphasizes only understanding; caring is not likely to develop through an objective factual or even a problem-solving approach.

The second edge is cognition---for we want a person to understand the complexity of caring, to understand the necessity and the process of attending to our relationships in a caring manner, to understand the mutual interdependency among people, animals, plants, and natural and human-made objects. Understanding may teach a person that she should care, but, it may never become a motivator for caring.

Affect and cognition, caring and understanding, may be co-constructed in relationship and co-dependent; they must certainly be integrated; but I think that caring cannot be assumed to follow understanding.

2) An ethic of caring develops over time.

If a system develops, a history is assumed...a beginning or precursor. When does an ethic of caring take root and begin to grow in a self-system? When considering caring for the people, animals, plants, natural and human-made objects that surround us in

our private and public lives, it might be easy to assume that it is developed primarily in school. It might also be easy to assume that an ethic of caring begins with a good curriculum, in essence a morality curriculum.

An ethic of caring, however, takes root in infancy beginning with caregiving, perhaps even in pregnancy as a mother, and hopefully a father, anticipates caring for the expected baby. It takes root in the anticipated caring of a caregiver, and in the actual caregiving of another person from birth. And if it begins there it took root in the anticipation of the grandparents for the parents, the great-grandparents for the grandparents, etc. In other words it began longer ago that we can return to. It takes root in physical caregiving accompanied by the psychological caregiving of a nurturing other, to be continued through the caregiving of nurturing others (family, neighbors, teachers, etc.) and develops into self-nurturing and eventually into the ability to nurture another---person, animal, plant, natural or human-made object. It develops into a feeling of caring enough about another sharer of our private or public domains to nurture that other. It develops through nurturing attachment experiences.

Attachment: Accentuating the Hestian Human Connection

Attachment, as theory and praxis, is complicated and often the focus of debate. But there are some basics: it is generally

accepted that every animal or human baby is wired for attachment (Klein, 1995) and requires at least one nurturing caregiver to sustain its early development both physically and psychologically. With human babies we have learned that physical care (feeding and cleaning) is not enough; that psychological care must also be present and "good enough" for a baby to thrive. "Good enough" psychological care means that the caregiver must be physically and frequently present and be emotionally connected: gentle in touch and general manner, communicative with eye contact and words, in tune and responsive to a baby's expressions of need and desire. How one actually does these things as a caregiver varies greatly, and is always modified by the variables of race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, and personality.

Separation/Individuation: Moving to the Hermean

Having experienced good enough, nurturing enough, attachment relationships a developing child moves on, well fortified, to the second crucial, but often forgotten, aspect of attachment: separation/individuation or the moving away from dependency on the caregiver. Early attachment, which has been essential, would become stifling should it continue. A developing autonomy or sense of self as an individual, separate from the caregiver is also essential, but requires a sense of loss and mourning for the idealized state just experienced (Klein, 1940/1975; Kavaler-Adler, 1992). This path is not a quick or easy one to follow. It

requires, in time, all of human childhood and adolescence and, for many of us, the rest of adulthood as well. Carol Gilligan writes that attachment and separation anchor the cycle of human life both biologically and psychologically (1982, p. 151); Margaret Mahler describes the psychological birth of a human being as well as the physical birth (1975).

Separation/individuation requires, in experience, differentiating the rest of the environment from the caregiver and exploring this environment in larger and larger pieces, more and more publicly as well as more and more specifically. It requires moving away, first within the private domain of home and later in the public domain of school and neighborhood, as well as checking back in. It requires feeling zesty and confident as well as feeling scared of the largeness and strangeness of increasing time spent in the public domain. It requires a sense of loss and mourning for the idealized state of attachment just experienced.

Integration of Attachment and Separation/Individuation

The child who has been supported by one or more caregivers in experiencing both attachment and separation/individuation develops a sense of personal wholeness and integrity, a sense of what it is to be me and no one else in both private and public domains. This child can reconcile the need for both oneness with a caregiver and separation from that caregiver as she moves more and more into the

public domain. This child also becomes able to reconcile other opposites: accepting his/her own goodness and badness, and feelings of love and hate; as well as the goodness and badness of others, the love and hate feelings in others including the caregiver (Kaplan, 1987). Each reconciliation requires some sense of loss of preceding modes of organizing the world and the mourning of those losses. This affect is the door both to a full participation in the present and to higher levels of personal and social functioning in both private and public domains, lessening the need for the control and domination of others who are also themselves and no one else.

Throughout the world well-nurtured, securely attached and confidently separated children are becoming concerned about, and often actively involved in, caring for the people, animals, plants, natural and human-made objects with which they interact in their private and public lives. EC educators are taking an increasing role in modeling and teaching an ethic of caring, in encouraging all children to be care-full as they try to be themselves.

Gender division has traditionally been an issue as theorists considered the development of an ethic of caring. It became clear to **Carol Gilligan** and others (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Ward & Taylor, 1988; Gilligan & Wiggans, 1988) that women's development was located in their (Hestian) experience of relationships, that "feminine" personality defines itself in relation to, and in connection with, other people more than "masculine" personality

does. Women define themselves in a context of human relationship and judge themselves "in terms of their ability to care" (1982, p. 17) which determined their construction of moral problems.

> ...the standard of moral judgment that informs their (women's) assessment of self is a standard of relationship, an ethic of nurturance, responsibility, and care. Measuring their strength in the activity of attachment ('giving to', 'helping out', 'being kind', 'not hurting')...(p. 159).

Gilligan found that "in all of women's descriptions, identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care". She continues, "...morality is seen by these women as arising from the experience of connection and conceived as a problem of inclusion rather than one of balancing claims" (p. 160), the underlying assumption being that morality stems from attachment.

Joan Tronto (1993) adds that caring is complex and situational, writing that ethical thinking and behavior are based on a complex portrait of a person and is determined by a person's "moral imagination, character, and actions" which must respond to the complexity of a given situation (p. 248). In addition, ethics cannot be applied to all cases, as assumed by universalistic ethical theories. People cannot care for everyone and everything equally; "it is easy to imagine that there will be some people or concerns about which we do not care", but does lack of care "free us from moral responsibility"? (p. 249). An ethic of caring must be "situated in the context of existing political and social theory" and may constitute a view of self, relationships, and

social order that is incompatible with an emphasis on individual rights (p. 251).

Tronto asserts that an ethic of care is a "set of sensibilities which every morally mature person should develop, alongside the sensibilities of justice morality" (p. 252) which implies that caring can be taught, in home and school and that male and female have equal potential to develop it.

Nona Lyons (1983) and **Patricia Thompson** also attempt to remove an ethic of caring from gender division.

Lyons defines two modes of describing self in relation to others: 1) separate/objective and 2) connected. In making ethical decisions separate/objective individuals, of either gender, "tend to use a morality of justice" while connected individuals, of either gender, tend to use "a morality of care". Each construction has strengths and weaknesses. Equality is an ideal and the strength of an ethic of justice; consideration of an individual's particular needs is an ideal and the strength of an ethic of care. Impartial concern for others' rights may not be sufficient to provide for care, however, and caring for others may be overly emotional and even unfair (p. 135).

Thompson describes, in a different way, two modes of conceptualizing self in relation to others or two systems of human

action, the Hestian and Hermean systems, which are not constructed according to gender. The Hestian system focuses on the private domain emphasizing domestic life, an ideology of connection, an ethic of caring, and on intrinsic rewards. The Hermean system focuses on the public domain, on civic life, on an ideology of control, on the ethic of justice, and on extrinsic rewards.

3) **An ethic of caring, as it develops, is dynamic, affected by known and unknown changing elements in the person as well as in the environment.**

We would like to conclude with this third aspect of the development of an ethic of caring.

The notion that an ethic of caring is dynamic implies that it is an open system influenced all along the way by our internal and external environments. Our internal and external environments are each multiple and complex and not completely understood, consisting of the interaction of biological levels (molecular, physiological, individual, group/population) with the multiple social and psychological influences over time of our Hestian and Hermean external environments and incorporated internal environments. Both our internal and external environments, in all of their complexities, affect each other and, of course, us.

Interwoven through our internal and external environments are

those two influences which we have rather glibly referred to as "nature" and "nurture" which we now know, most of us, after years of debate, cannot be wisely separated as explanations for human behavior. So, as home economists and EC educators, we are dealing with people who are dynamic organisms in some kind of dynamic relationship with their dynamic environments. In addition, as home economists and EC educators realize, these dynamic environments include both the private domain of household, family, and home as well as the public domain of school, work, community. All of this dynamism makes for remarkable complexity which we try to organize and order.

How do children develop an ethic of caring? Can we, in our different yet related fields, facilitate the development of an ethic of caring in children...the development of care-full people in both the private Hestian and public Hermean domains?

In attempting to answer these questions we must recognize that we are groping with complexity in both question and answer. It seems apparent that the experience of early and continued nurturing attachment relationships in both the private and public domain dramatically affect the development of an ethic of caring and must precede any effort at teaching on our part. Recent research on infancy provides compelling indication that the foundations of an ethic of caring are present early in child development (Gilligan, 1988; Kagan, 1984; Stern, 1985) in an infant's responsiveness to

the feelings and caregiving of others.

It remains for developmental theorists, home economists, EC educators, and parents to integrate our thinking and action so that we can continue to move forward in conceptualizing and facilitating the continuing development of Hestian people who are care-full, who are capable of connection, capable of cooperation, capable of nurturing in both their private and public lives.

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